About Our Cover

The Emancipation Memorial, one of the country's first works celebrating the martyred president, has stood in Lincoln Park on Washington's East Capitol Street since 1876. Although of considerable artistic merit, the bronze monument has, over the years, evoked much controversy, both for the subservient posture of its freedman and for the incorrect implication that President Abraham Lincoln freed all the slaves with his Proclamation in 1863. As our lead article points out, the Jesuit fathers also faced considerable controversy when they chose to rid their Maryland plantations of slaves. Ironically, while the famous statue celebrates what was, at best, emancipation limited to some of the nation's slaves, the Jesuits only fleetingly considered emancipation before selling their slaves down river.

Actually, the statue is a visual symbol of the beliefs and aspirations of the majority of Americans in the era of post-Civil War reconstruction. First, it was meant to honor the assassinated leader, bowing to the popular perception of Lincoln as the great emancipator. Ignoring the actual status of African Americans in that era, it also used the ex-slave's posture, his broken shackles and other symbols of servitude, to imply that the African Americans were rising to take their rightful place as free members of society.

These ideas had their enthusiastic supporters among the freedmen, and especially black veterans of the Union Army, who, according to the U.S. Park Service, were the sole contributors to the construction costs of the work. The national press made much of that fact, featuring articles about the first contributor, Charlotte Scott, a former slave who donated $5.00 to the cause. The monument also had its critics in the black community. Frederick Douglass, the great black leader and citizen of Washington, gave the keynote address at the monument's dedication. With President Ulysses Grant looking on, he criticized the work, saying, "The statue shows the Negro on his knees when a more manly attitude would have been indicative of freedom," a critique often heard even today.

The sculptor, Thomas Ball, was already in 1876 famous for his monumental art works, most notably important statues of George Washington, Daniel Webster, and Senator Charles Sumner. A Boston native, Ball began his career as a musician and portrait painter before taking up sculpture. He spent most of his long life studying and working in Florence, Italy.

Ball's design was somewhat modified at the insistence of the Western Sanitary Commission, a St. Louis based war-relief agency that collected the money for the project. As finely executed, Lincoln

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The Jesuits and Their Slaves in Maryland

And the Critique of Brother Joseph Mobberly, S.J.

By Anna Watkins

"Can a man serve God faithfully and possess slaves? Is it lawful to keep men in perpetual servitude?" About 200 years ago Brother Joseph Mobberly, S.J., addressed these questions in his essay, "Slavery or Cham." In that work he alluded to a controversy that was embroiling the American Jesuit community of his day. The need to abolish slavery on its farms in southern Maryland had stimulated a lively debate among the Jesuits on how this was to be achieved, whether through emancipation or outright sale. The following lines attempt to shed some light on this complicated subject.

THE JESUIT MISSION IN AMERICA

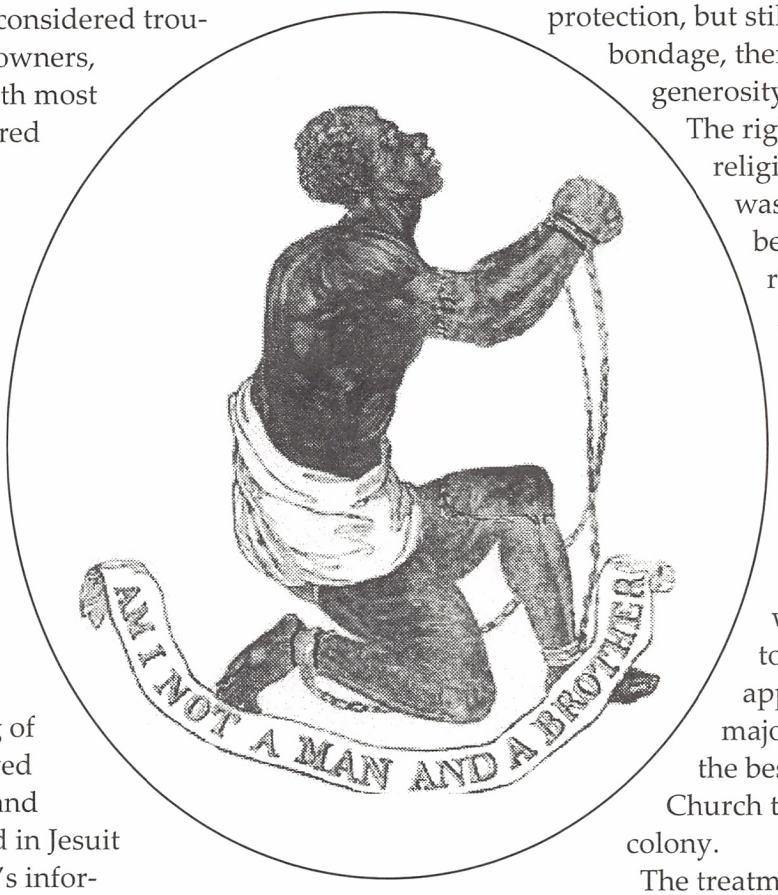
The Maryland colony was established by a grant from King Charles I to George Calvert, the King's councilor and secretary of state and a convert to Catholicism. Named the first Lord Baltimore, he died before receiving the King's charter, but his son Cecil, the second Lord Baltimore, received it in 1632. Although the charter granted the proprietor the power to enact any laws he believed necessary, it made no provision for the establishment of a state religion. Cecil Calvert's main interest in colonization was economic, but as a member of a persecuted religion he was also interested in creating a refuge for his fellow Catholics. In fact, in his celebrated Maryland Act of Toleration, Calvert accepted the need for religious pluralism and offered freedom of conscience to any Christian group. Regarding his fellow Catholics, he asked the provincial of the Jesuits in England to send priests to the colony. He specified that they would receive no subsidy, but were expected to be self-supporting by farming the land granted them for that purpose.

The English Jesuits were only too happy to accept Lord Baltimore's offer. They wanted to work among the colonists and convert the Indians. They hoped to make enough money to support themselves, building their own residences as well as erecting churches, seminaries, and schools for the education of Americans for the priesthood.

Three Jesuits, including Father Andrew White, S.J., arrived in America in March 1634 with the first Maryland settlers. These Jesuits were part of an elite Catholic minority who would live along side working class, mainly Protestant, settlers. In order to insure good relations with their Protestant neighbors, Lord Baltimore and the Jesuits agreed to model the new colony along the lines of the medieval manor houses in England, including their social structure with landlords, tenants, and servants. The Jesuits hoped that their manors, also called plantations, would offer an opportunity for new emigrants working for a Jesuit landlord to convert, thereby becoming a welcome addition to the Catholic minority in the colony. Above all, the farms would provide a safe and private place for conducting Catholic religious services. However, the Jesuit fathers soon realized that the performance of their priestly duties, including circuit riding to far away places, would not allow them enough time to care for their plantations. They needed help. The

business of running a plantation brought about the need to hire servants.

During most of the 17th century the majority of these servants were indentured workers from Europe who agreed to toil for a specified time after which they would be freed with a gift of a tract of land. By 1715, however, the Maryland Assembly, then controlled by the colony's Protestant majority, levied an importation tax on all "Irish, Popish Servants" which practically ended the flow of Catholic indentured workers. Actually, the Irish were considered troublemakers by most landowners, and the Jesuits, along with most Catholic planters, preferred African slaves over indentured immigrants.



SLAVE HOLDING

Did the Jesuits ever consider the morality of hiring slaves? What lead them to engage in a practice seemingly so contradictory to Catholic principles? How did they reconcile the Catholic doctrine that we all are children of God with the keeping of slaves, who were deprived of their human dignity and civil rights? As indicated in Jesuit Father Thomas Murphy's informative book, *Jesuit Slave Holding in Maryland 1717–1838,* there seems to be no record of Jesuit debate on these issues at the beginning of their mission in Maryland. They needed help in maintaining their farms, and, like other planters, accepted ownership of slaves, many of them donated by benefactors. Later, as a result of the temporary suppression of the Jesuit order and the American Revolution that brought about religious liberty, the possibility of discontinuing the practice of slave holding was talked about, but produced no result.

The Jesuit pattern of employing slaves was different from others because of their spirituality, training, and the financial situation of their farms. Believing themselves members of the white, "superior," race, the Jesuit planters felt morally obliged to care for those of the "inferior" race. Consequently, the Order accepted the slaves and accorded them spiritual freedom and protection, but still kept them in bondage, thereby combining generosity and repression. The right to universal religious liberty was separate, they believed, from the right to personal freedom, including the slaves' right to buy, own, and sell property. A policy that combined the rules of universal religious liberty with the right to own slaves appeared to the majority of the Jesuits the best way for the Church to survive in the colony.

The treatment of slaves varied according to the attitudes and beliefs of their masters. In contrast to the Jesuits, most Protestants considered slaves unworthy of baptism. Others refused to have their slaves baptized because they believed it would lead to manumission. The Jesuits, on the other hand, believed that slaves should be recognized by their masters as "members of Jesus Christ and redeemed by his precious blood." They tried to

have them brought up in the Catholic faith and advised Catholic slave owners to do the same. But the slaves' education was limited to learning the catechism and some specialized skills like carpentry, weaving, and sewing. The Jesuits did not see the need for teaching reading and writing since slaves did not read books or maintain correspondence. Further, the Jesuits feared that literate slaves might produce inflammatory pamphlets and that too much independent reading would build up their desire for a better life as free men.

Lacking the profit motive prevalent elsewhere, the Jesuits were not strict taskmasters. As a result, working conditions for their slaves were comparatively favorable. The nickname "Priest's slave" indicated this advantageous situation, and the phrase "one of ours" referred not only to a priest's membership in the Jesuit Order, but also to his material possessions, including slaves. The Jesuits did not insist on dividing labor between black and white servants or between masters and servants. Inspired by St. Ignatius, the Fathers themselves helped with manual tasks when necessary, sometimes working alongside their slaves in the fields. They gave their slaves days off during the summer, on Sundays, and on important holidays. They encouraged the slaves to attend Mass or at least public prayers or spiritual exercises in the planter's house. Christian marriages of baptized slaves from adjacent plantations were conducted by written permission from the respective masters, so called "marrying by notes."

Some slaves were also paid for work not specifically related to farming such as digging ditches or clearing land. Others had little patches behind their quarters to grow produce, which they could sell for money or goods. Father Francis Neale, S.J., established a sewing school for young slave girls, and Father George Hunter, S.J., hired two French women to teach slaves the art of sewing. Slave shoemakers used hides furnished by the plantations to make a profit selling products. Nevertheless, at times the Jesuits' treatment of their slaves did not comply with Christian principles. Slaves were sometimes whipped and often complained about insufficient food rations and inadequate sleeping quarters.

MANAGEMENT OF JESUIT PLANTATIONS

Eventually the Jesuits developed a policy promoting an orderly form of slaveholding. Working together as "The "Corporation of the Roman Catholic Clergy of Maryland," they passed a resolution outlining responsibilities of the estate manager, including the primary one regarding the use of profits for housekeeping and servants. The Fathers used their farms to support their apostolic work, but as time went by, the profit from crops barely covered the cost of keeping slaves. In addition to maintaining the farms, the Jesuits were responsible for a number of large payments, including maintenance of a chapel on plantation grounds, subsidizing the building and upkeep of Georgetown College, and care for elderly and disabled slaves. These financial obligations were a drain on the farms' resources which resulted in perpetual deficits. The Jesuits were able to carry on their unproductive practices because they enjoyed continued support from wealthy Catholics, not only financial assistance, but also legal advice which saved them from suffering serious consequences of their mismanagement.

The Jesuit planters grew to dislike the slavery system, but did little to get rid of it. They continued to pursue their unsatisfactory management through inertia. The spiritual care and paternalistic guidance of the slaves as well as the attainment of civil rights for Catholic planters were their main concerns. Financial matters received little attention. The Order was not market oriented. It failed to follow the new trend in which slave labor was used not only for the maintenance of the family, but also for the profitable production of goods for export to Europe. Farm products from Jesuit plantations continued to be used only for the needs of the farm and for students at tuition-free Georgetown College.

But why did the Jesuit plantations always end up with deficits? Was it the Fathers' lack of training in financial matters and in "the cultivation of landed estates" in the words of John Carroll? Or was it the tension between the Jesuits' resolve of not using slaves to their full potential because it could lead to their material exploitation and a hope to make the plantations a profitable enterprise? Why did they continue their unproductive farms which harmed primarily their slaves? Brother Mobberly was among the first to detect the main reason for the financial problems of the plantations. Later on when he pondered the institution of slavery in general did he answer the questions cited in the introduction of this article.

THE VOICE OF BROTHER JOSEPH MOBBERLY, S.J.

Born in Montgomery County, Maryland, Mobberly studied for the priesthood at Georgetown College from 1798 to 1802. He enrolled at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore in 1804, but the following year he returned to Georgetown to become a Brother of the Society of Jesus. In 1806 Father Peter Kenney, S.J., appointed Mobberly manager of St. Inigoe's Manor in St. Mary's County. Mobberly remained in that post for fourteen years until complaints from the slaves about the very harsh treatment by this "very bad man" — Mobberly was known to favor whipping the unruly — caused his removal. He spent the rest of his life at Georgetown College and was buried in the Georgetown Jesuit Community's cemetery.

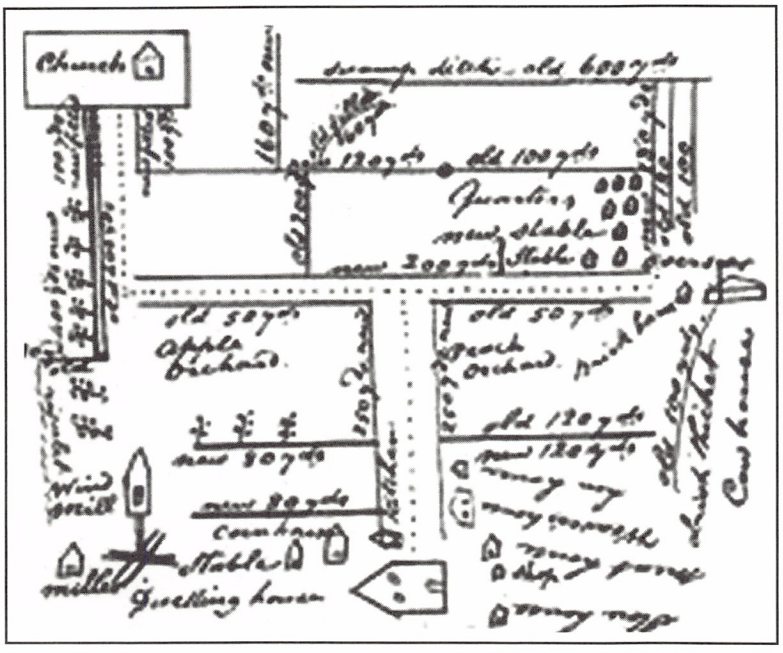
On the basis of his experience at St. Inigoe's, Mobberly concluded that getting rid of the inefficient slave population would solve the financial problems of the Jesuit plantations. He was the first Maryland Jesuit to consider practical changes in the management of the farms. The British occupation of a portion of St. Inigoe's in 1814 had given him the idea of reorganizing the property without slaves. In the following year he informed the superior of the Jesuits in Maryland and president of Georgetown, Father Giovanni Grassi, S.J., of his assessment, promising that "we shall make more and more to our satisfaction without slaves."

Grassi was not persuaded. Later on Mobberly reinforced his proposal with his own calculations. He estimated that the replacement of half of the slaves with only a small number of hired workers would result in significant savings. Yet at the same time he was silent on the future of the dismissed slaves. "I sincerely regret that slaves were ever introduced into the United States, but as we have them, we know not how to get rid of them" he noted in his diary, a position which prevented him from becoming a hard-line abolitionist. His proposals were ignored, he believed, because of his status as a mere Brother and because of the disrespect the slaves had shown him.

Mobberly also disapproved of the type of plants cultivated by the Jesuits. Low quality tobacco, their main crop, was needed to generate enough revenue for feeding both the Jesuits and the slaves, but growing tobacco led to soil exhaustion. In response, the Jesuits switched to other crops. They preferred corn rather than wheat, because one acre of land would yield more bushels of corn than wheat. Indeed, the slaves benefited from increased rations of corn, even though wheat was far more profitable to the farms. In keeping with their philosophy, the Jesuits sacrificed the monetary advantage of selling the more profitable wheat for better feeding of the slaves. By 1830 the Jesuits would find themselves in a serious financial crisis brought about by the unsatisfactory condition of the soil, discontent of the slaves, and mismanagement of the plantations.

THE END OF SLAVERY

In response to orders from the Superior General of the Society, Father Kenney visited the farms in Maryland during 1819–1820. He was expected to report on the reasons for the continued financial



Sketch of St. Inigoes plantation. *Note slave quarters (right of center).*

difficulties of the plantations. Kenney soon realized that the serene picture of prosperous-looking farms, acres of land, and hundreds of slaves that greeted him did not represent true conditions, namely the accumulation of a sizeable debt and the mistreatment of slaves. He encountered "splendid poverty, so much apparent wealth but real poverty" as well as "benevolent preaching but harsh action" toward the slaves.

In his effort to find solutions to these problems, Kenney uncovered several deficiencies. First of all was the lack of a uniform system for governing the slaves which led to their arbitrary treatment at the various plantations. Further, there were no rules for uniform bookkeeping. He also realized that the Jesuits' attitude toward treating slaves as having the same dignity as other baptized Catholics and their belief that slaves could not care for themselves had prevented the Fathers from working the slaves to their full potential. Ironically, he noticed that the slaves, however pampered, rarely practiced their religion. Consequently, improvement in the management and financial situation of the plantations could not take place. The Jesuits failed to recognize that the gentle treatment of slaves largely contributed to their unsatisfactory management of their plantations. On the contrary, the priests hoped that their considerate dealing with slaves would set an example for other slaveholders and remind them to concentrate more on the treatment of their slaves than putting all their effort into making money.

The Jesuits did not discipline their slaves sufficiently. "The better a Negro is treated, the worse he behaves," Brother Mobberly claimed. Kenney also came to realize that without slaves the Mission would produce better results, and the Society would be free of accusations from abroad that the Jesuits in America were holding men in servitude. The Order's General Congregation of 1820 recalled Kenney before he could complete his assignment. Four years later Mobberly wrote to the Father General suggesting that the Maryland Mission should get rid of its slaves as they had proved ineffective. But again, Mobberly's recommendation was ignored.

The decade following Kenney's visit to the plantations witnessed a number of important developments. The behavior of the slaves changed. Rowdiness and violence became commonplace. Despite the financial security of life on the plantations, some slaves were so dissatisfied that they succumbed to the lure of freedom and escaped. As a result, Catholic planters turned irascible, and priests became frustrated. It was a time of growing optimism regarding the growth of Catholicism in the United States. But danger signs remained as the obvious hostility shown by members of the nativist movement toward Catholics was gaining momentum across the country.

In view of these significant changes in the economic and social world, Johannes Philipp

Roothaan, Father General of the Society, in 1830 appointed Kenney Superior of the Maryland Mission and Special Visitor to the plantations. In addition to examining the finances, Kenney was ordered to inspect living conditions on the farms. In case the slaves were indeed neglected because the farm income was insufficient to support them adequately, Kenney should decide on the basis of fiscal and moral grounds whether it was necessary to sell both the plantations as well as the slaves. The revenue could be used for "other things," Roothaan remarked. In July 1831 Kenney recommended that the Father General order the sale of the slaves and plantations. But before Kenney could complete his assignment, Roothaan decided to forego any changes in the management of the plantations.

Despite the General's reluctance to change, Kenney's proposal became more convincing following the elevation of the Maryland Mission to the status of a province of the Jesuit Order in 1833. A decision had to be made on how to get rid of the slaves. The Maryland Jesuits were reluctant to accept manumission, believing that slaves lived better than free blacks. Freedmen, the Jesuits were convinced, would be unable to cope with those plantation owners who routinely exploited free black workers. Some Jesuits resisted abolition because they believed the idea came from the Protestant heretics. Further, the Fathers perceived abolition as a way for the rich to abandon their responsibility toward the poor, which was contrary to Ignatian principles.

Nevertheless, the financial situation on the plantations — their contributions to the province were minimal — favored a mass sale rather than individual sales which took place only to keep families together or punish troublesome workers. In support of their preference some argued that the parental care extended to the slaves interfered with the priests' religious duties. Others claimed that through the governance of slaves, Jesuits had come to embrace the same mundane values as the large slaveholders. One Jesuit plantation had shown much improvement after the sale of its slaves, further arguing in favor of a mass sale. Another argument pointed out that the Jesuits' religious consecration would prevent them from fighting any future slave uprising. But most importantly, some Jesuits contended, the proceeds from a mass sale would provide the much needed cash for the running of the plantations.

Nevertheless, opposition to the sale of slaves, championed by Father Stephen L. Dubuisson, S.J., former president of Georgetown, was loud and clear. He and others argued that the slaves would not be able to care for themselves. They were a necessary part of the Jesuit plantation system, not only for working on the farms, but also for helping to look after the aged and infirm. They should never be shipped South, a possibility they dreaded. It was unfair to separate families, Dubuisson argued. He and his allies believed that proponents of a mass sale did not consider the benefit to slaves derived from life in a religious community. Some of his allies even maintained that the plantations constituted "a perpetual good" which should not be abandoned. The slaves were "children whose care and wellbeing had been given to us by God," not just an economic investment.

The arguments continued. Even if first buyers were Catholics, some Jesuits contended, there was no guarantee that they would keep the slaves, but might very well sell them to Protestants. Furthermore, the Fathers generally did not trust banks with the money from any sale and preferred to receive land instead.

Despite the persuasive arguments, Father Dubuisson lost the battle. He did not expect a financial benefit from a sale of the slaves, but maintained his conclusion that a reform in the administration of the farms could achieve the same goal of making them more productive. Meanwhile the number of Jesuit-owned slaves had increased to 272.

In October 1836 Father General approved the sale of all slaves. The Jesuit province had specified that, in view of the small size of the plantations and the possibility of breaking up families, all

slaves would be sold to Catholic planters in the South who owned hundreds of slaves. He also specified some conditions for the sale: the religious needs of slaves must be respected, slave families must stay together, and proceeds from the sale must be used for the education of men for the priesthood. He also directed that those slaves who could not be sold or moved because of age or illness must be provided for "as justice and charity demand." In June 1838, the newly appointed provincial, Thomas F. Mulledy, S.J., signed the final contract for the sale.

All 272 slaves from four estates in southern Maryland were sold for $115,000 to two Louisiana planters. It was an emotional event that created much criticism. A European Jesuit from one of the plantations disapproved in no uncertain words: "No one does this sort of thing except evil persons, such as slave traders who care about nothing but money." Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore was also distressed over the sale, particularly regarding the separation of family members. Roothaan was mostly disturbed about the provincial using part of the proceeds to reduce the indebtedness on Georgetown College buildings. Father Mulledy, reacting to the criticism and adverse publicity, resigned from his position as provincial.

It soon became evident that the farms were indeed the beneficiaries of the sale. The observations of Mobberly and Kenney proved well founded. The departure of the slaves finally prompted the Jesuits to devote more attention to the administration of their plantations. By then they were well versed in financial management and succeeded in making the plantations profitable. The system of tenant farming and sharecropping proved successful. However, the slaves did not fare so well. The new owners did not treat them kindly, separated families, and denied them the practice of their Catholic religion.

"SLAVERY OR CHAM"

And how did Brother Mobberly arrive at answers to the questions "Can a man serve God faithfully and possess slaves. Is it then lawful to keep them in servitude?" as quoted in the introduction to this article.

In the early 1820s, during his involuntary retirement to Georgetown College, Mobberly, having fallen out with his superiors and hated by the slaves, kept a private diary which included a 104-page philosophical treatise on the morality of slavery entitled "Slavery or Cham." Although never published, it is nevertheless of interest because, unfortunately, its conclusions were shared by a large number of American Jesuits.

As to the title, Cham, Noah's youngest son, had a choice regarding his reaction to his father's condition when he found him naked, drunk, and asleep (Genesis 9:21–27). Unlike his brothers, Cham took advantage of his father's condition. This was a serious violation by the son, the "ruled," of the honor due to his father, his "ruler." For his sinful behavior he and his descendants were punished by God. Mobberly hoped to demonstrate in his essay what would occur if the world had only Chams, individuals without control, imbued with aggressiveness and rebellion, who wanted to take advantage of those whom they should have regarded as their natural superiors.

Mobberly understood the prevailing abolitionist argument, that all men are naturally free. God never made one man to be enslaved by another. It was against Divine law to possess slaves, and more criminal, to sell them. Slavery, therefore, was wrong, always and everywhere. In contrast, Mobberly defended slavery. It was not wrong always and everywhere, he argued, and in some cases was actually "a necessary paternalistic evil to preserve order."

He was influenced by sermons and letters from colonial era Jesuits who interpreted St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* as justifying slavery. Some were convinced that Christ's submissiveness

to secular authority showed Divine ratification for a paternalistic social order. The Jesuit saint, Robert Bellarmine, for example, taught that God's division between "ruled" and "rulers" applied to both the natural and spiritual worlds. Nature was arranged on the basis of hierarchy, and slavery was a natural part of creation.

Based on these assumptions, Mobberly concluded that slavery was not only lawful, reasonable, and good, but also necessary. He believed that the social hierarchy on earth was created by God, reflecting the hierarchy in heaven. Due subordination to ruling powers, such as slaves to masters, was necessary to avoid anarchy. Later on Mobberly's ideas became popular among anti-abolitionists. In 1835 Henry Clay charged the abolitionists with damaging the harmony of the Union, which, he said, protected master as well as slave. In conclusion, Mobberly answered his questions in the affirmative. Yes, it was possible to own slaves and serve God faithfully, and yes, it was lawful to keep men in servitude.

***Note on Sources**: Brother Mobberly's critique of the Jesuit slave system and his defense of slavery are located in his* Diary *(part V, Fourth of July, 1826), Georgetown University Archives. Among the many authoritative secondary sources, see: Robert Emmet Curran, S.J.,* Splendid Poverty—Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland 1805–1838; Catholics in the Old South Essays on Church and Culture, *ed. Randall M. Miller and John I. Wakelyn (1983); Thomas Murphy, S.J.,* Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland 1717–1836 *(2001).*

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The Stern Boss

Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, the Archbishop of Washington from 1948 to 1973, was an irrepressible church leader of Irish origin. This is well illustrated in an excerpt from a memoir by Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Lyons.

Heads of Archdiocesan offices and agencies grew not to be surprised when the Archbishop, who was a notorious early riser, would call before they had had their first sip of coffee. He would tell them that he had just read in the morning paper of a family that had been or was about to be evicted, or about an inaccurate statement made in a news story, or about someone who was stranded some place, an alien who was being deported — whatever. He wanted something done and wanted to be kept informed about progress and results. Or perhaps it would be later in the day and a distraught mother who, being unable to get her son or daughter into a school, had strategically arranged to be in his path to beseech him to intervene on her behalf. To explain to him that there was a process established to deal with placement requests in an orderly and fair manner was useless. It would be met with "Sure, sure, I know all that," and then with a wink and a grin, "but you'll take care of the poor soul." And of course, the "poor soul" would be taken care of.

On one occasion there was a man picketing the Chancery Office on the sidewalk below the Cardinal's window. First he sent someone out to see what the man wanted and what might be done for him. When told that the man just wanted to picket, no further action was taken until a bit after noon. When the Cardinal saw the man still picketing, he sent word to "Take that poor lad a sandwich and something to drink. It's hot out there and he must be hungry and thirsty."